

# Managing Creativity

EXPLORING THE PARADOX

CAMBRIDGE

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## 14 | Juicy Salif as a cultish totem

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In the mainstream Spanish film *All Men Are the Same* by Manuel Gómez Pereira (1994), three flat-sharing bachelors hire a young maid to help with the cleaning. She falls in love with the handsome one but, feeling betrayed, she decides to leave her job and steal some of their property. She picks up a strange, menacing, spaceship-looking object placed on top of the TV and the rest of the storyline develops around her putting the object back or taking it depending on the mood of her relationship with the main male character. What she stole was a lemon squeezer. It was not, however, any lemon squeezer: it was Philippe Starck's *Juicy Salif*.<sup>1</sup>

I approach the analysis of this object from the point of view of a fine art practitioner – a sculptor. The account I will provide of *Juicy Salif* comes from a particular position in relation to objecthood and the subject. This is not the first time this object has been extrapolated from its field, however. The knowledge generated around Starck's lemon squeezer is shared, almost in equal measure, between the subject areas of product design and computing, the latter exemplified by organizations such as the Association for Computing Machinery (ACM 2006), the conference Designing Pleasurable Products and Interfaces (ICDPPI 2003; Russo and de Moraes 2003), the fields of Human-Computer Interaction – HCI – (Hassenzahl 2004; Norman 2004) and Captology – Computers As Persuasive Technology (Stanford University 2005; Khaslavsky and Shedroff 1999). The relationship between *Juicy Salif* and art, as we will see later, is not all that tenuous.

French interior and product designer Philippe Starck conceptualized *Juicy Salif* for the medium-sized Italian kitchenware company Alessi, which has manufactured the lemon squeezer since 1990. Alessi was set up in the 1920s outside Milan, as a business to produce household goods in metal. Since then the company has evolved to become, in the 1980s, a popular example of postmodern high design

and of Italian design, with its important craft tradition and its intellectual links (Lees-Maffei 2002: 38). In addition, Alessi's emphasis on the concept of family, through the centralized running of its business and its manifest product 'families', is, as will be seen below, one of its key Italian characteristics. Alessi, as Grace Lees-Maffei indicates (2002: 41), is known for its technical innovation in relation to style, materials and function, which is achieved through small production runs, and versatile processes rather than investment in technologically advanced equipment. This investment in innovation differentiates Alessi's products from those of its competitors, so when it commissioned Starck, a 'star' personality and a controversial designer (Lloyd and Snelders 2003: 241), to create a range of products including a lemon squeezer, the framework was set for a culturally relevant object with value beyond its function and immediate context.

With *Juicy Salif*, Starck subverted the way manual lemon squeezers look, to the delight of Alessi. My investigations into the appearance of citrus juicers has led me to categorize them into six distinct groups according to form, action and delivery of juice:

1. Hand juicer: by pressing and twisting a lemon half against a solid ribbed cone, the pulp of the fruit is crushed and the juice is delivered (sometimes filtered through a strainer) into a tray or shallow bowl which may be separate.
2. Citrus press: by placing half of the fruit into a jaw and then pressing it with a cone, it delivers juice directly into a glass.
3. Citrus reamer: used to extract smaller amounts of juice, the reamer works through twisting its flute-shaped end into a half fruit.
4. Wedge squeezer: by placing a fruit wedge into the squeezer and pressing with the handle, a small amount of juice is delivered directly into the glass.
5. Citrus trumpet: this tool is screwed onto the whole fruit and through squeezing its outer rind, juice flows out of the spout of the trumpet.
6. Tabletop citrus juicer: through pressing fruit, usually through a handle, it delivers juice directly into a glass.

To use *Juicy Salif*, one would have to put a glass underneath the head, in between the three legs that keep the product upright. The glass, of course, would have to be of a particular size, as the squeezer does not have mobile parts. A citrus fruit, cut in half, would be hand pressed or



rotated against the ribbed head and juice would trickle down through the grooves, directly into the glass. *Juicy Salif* thus combines the twisting action of the hand juicer with the extraction power of the reamer and the wedge squeezer (which may be used more for party drinks like cocktails rather than cooking food); the direct glass delivery of the citrus press and the trumpet; and the kitchen presence of the tabletop juicer, as its disproportionate legs make storage in common kitchen cupboards complicated. Still, it does not fit comfortably into any of those categories, and its shape is more reminiscent of popular culture references related to sci-fi than of any squeezer. Added to this is the fact that, as a lemon squeezer, its performance leaves a lot to be desired. So, if it is not as efficient as its rival products, how can *Juicy Salif* be evaluated? What brought Starck to create something that would not fulfil its intended function? Why is this lemon squeezer a market success and a recognized design icon? What do viewers, owners and users get out of it? This is what this chapter aims to explore.

One could evaluate this object's success simply by its economic value exemplified by its market performance, which is outstanding. It may also be argued that what makes a poorly performing object become valuable in economic and cultural terms, what rewards Starck's own brand of creativity and Alessi's innovative vision with a following *en masse*, is clever promotion, sophisticated marketing strategies and the right kind of early adopters. Yet that would not account for its significance and iconic status. Citations in research papers, appearances in the media, market research involving product owners and data on designers influenced by this object show that it has a cult following beyond the design milieu. Two main debates dominate the discussion around the meaning, conceptualization, production, marketing, consumption and influence of this object: those concentrating on its (lack of) functional value and those focusing on its symbolic value, a type of value related to kinship and culture, and not instantly measured in terms of money. For both, the way *Juicy Salif* manifests itself is a reference point, as no other lemon squeezer looks like it. Even if it comes at a performative cost, its impact and significance are seen to be derived from its outward aspect. This object has even been exhibited in contemporary art galleries, certifying its contribution to culture and truly converting it into an object of contemplation, unfit to squeeze lemons. It is this, its physical appearance and the connotations it arouses in viewers that makes it what it is: a valued and valuable object.

I will specifically explore the psychodynamics of *Juicy Salif's* seduction; the psychological aspects this object brings out in people, both individually and as social groups, as it is in the particular relationship it establishes with its users, owners and viewers that its cult status and value lies. I will argue that the reason for this attribution of value derives from its power of seduction, its capacity to lead astray, not least from its perceived function. This, however, will not be approached through historical or purely economic contexts, but rather, through relational and subjective aspects. Here, I do not seek the truth about seduction (which, as we will see, would deceive me, anyway); or, indeed, an interpretation, which would kill it; or, again, its representation, which would be a flawed and false undertaking, if not impossible. I will start by exploring the functional and symbolic value of *Juicy Salif*. I will then attempt to reconcile these debates, which often seem in opposition, with the help of Jacques Lacan's Object (a) (1986), the object at the centre of his psychoanalytic theory of desire and his *Discourse of the Analyst* (1991). As Lacanian psychoanalysis is concerned primarily with the subject's desire and her rapport to objects, and is a relational practice, this framework seems appropriate for an analysis of *Juicy Salif*. The new conceptualization that will ensue will help us understand this object's value in a new way.

### Functional value

The debate around the usability (and non-usability) of *Juicy Salif* is at the centre of many studies about this product's function. Beatriz Russo and Anamaria de Moraes (2003) from the Laboratory of Ergonomics and Usability in Rio de Janeiro, performed tests with this object, exploring usage, cleaning ease, work surface appearance after use and product aesthetics. The tests found that a majority of participants noted the high effort demand, inefficiency, dirty work area and instability of the product. Russo and de Moraes also explored ownership of *Juicy Salif* by gathering a sample group and looking at their reasons for buying the product, their usage frequency and the product's durability. Twenty-eight per cent of participants stated they had never used this lemon squeezer for its proper function: they purchased it as a decorative, aesthetic and status-bearer object; they used it as a display item, a function which is also integrated in the design, as its measurements make its storage in cupboards difficult. The tests concluded that, although

the product is easy enough to clean, its durability is not satisfactory. Height – 29cm –, stability, the diameter of its head – 14 cm – and the materials used – gold or plated aluminium – were its main problems.

Beth Preston (2000) explores philosophical aspects of the term 'function' as is attributed to things. She argues for two distinct types: *proper function* (an item's disposition to perform based on historical selection, e.g. a chair is for seating) and *system function* (an item's disposition to perform within a system, e.g. in order to change this light bulb, I stand on a chair). She reveals the complexity of function by looking at the notions of misuse and malfunction, both of which are, of course, relevant to *Juicy Salif*, and concludes that function has a dynamic character: multifunction and function changes are a constant in material culture. A lack of consideration of ergonomic factors, Russo and de Moraes (2003: 147) argue, is what motivates the malfunction of this squeezer, which may dangerously slip into consumer dissatisfaction, a view endorsed by John Heskett (2003: 58) and, to a certain extent, disproved by Marc Hassenzahl (2004). Peter Lloyd and Dirk Snelders (2003: 251), however, take this object's functional peculiarity further: its intended function (to squeeze lemons) differs from its actual function (to be displayed); its proper function is different from its system function (Preston 2000). So, what is its function? What is *Juicy Salif* for?

Lloyd and Snelders (2003) start their study with a quote by design thinker Adrian Forty, from his book *Objects of Desire* ('no design works unless it embodies ideas that are held in common by the people for whom the object is intended') (Forty 1986 in Lloyd and Snelders 2003: 237) and set out to explore whether personal creativity is a determinant of success. Their enterprise crosses ours, as *Juicy Salif* is their case study. They attribute the product's successful sales at an average rate of 50,000 units per year since its launch in 1990 (Lloyd and Snelders 2003: 238) to consumer misuse as much as to the designer's creativity and the ideas present in a particular society (in the case of this object, Western European and North American societies in the late 1980s and 90s). According to them, Starck himself may have adopted the object's system function retrospectively, taking the focus out of its performative limitations and into its visual manifestation:

The *Juicy Salif* lemon squeezer [1990–1] is the biggest success of all. Strange, because it's a difficult object. Now it's well known, but when it

wasn't, you thought, 'What is this?' A lot of people told me, 'This object is stupid because electric zinzinzin costs half and works better', ... Yes, it's true. There are one hundred electric things that work better. But sometimes you must choose why you design – in this case not to squeeze lemons ... Sometimes you need some more humble service. (Starck 1997)

This is not a very good lemon squeezer: but that's not its only function. I had this idea that when a couple gets married it's the sort of thing they would get as a wedding present. So when the new husband's parents come round, he and his father sit in the living room with a beer, watching television, and the new mother-in-law and daughter-in-law sit in the kitchen to get to know each other better. 'Look at what we got as a present', the daughter-in-law will say. (Morgan 1999: 9)

This identification of *Juicy Salif's* proper function as a conversation starter (Norman 2004: 112) or 'social lubricant' (Lloyd and Snelders 2003: 251) contributes to its acquisition of artistic status. Two additional factors add to this perception. First, the fact that Alessi, the commissioning and manufacturing company behind the lemon squeezer, treats its designers 'like gods' (Lees-Maffei 2002: 43–5), differentiating their intellectual and cultural role from the more practical responsibilities, which are left to a technical team which interprets the designer's sketches (Lees-Maffei 2002: 43–4). Second, Starck's designs have been 'literally and figuratively – placed on pedestals' (Whitely 1994: 131) in shop displays (Julier 2000: 70–1), design museums and, more importantly, art galleries and museums (see, for example, Sala Rekalde, Spain, in 1997; Philadelphia Museum of Art in 1998; Marble Palace at the State Russian Museum; Centre for Contemporary Art at Ujazdowski Castle, Warsaw, in 2002; Groninger Museum, the Netherlands; Centre Pompidou in 2003). *Juicy Salif* has even been included in an Art History timeline at the Metropolitan Museum in New York (2006). The tenth anniversary edition of *Juicy Salif*, gold plated, takes its artistic status to the extreme, as its precious material is incompatible with the citric acid of the fruit.

Nigel Whitely's account of the relationship between high art and the high street further explores this aesthetization of design through display in shops and museums: 'It is a change from the idea of the importance of "primary" function – how well the product works or mechanically operates, and value for money – to "tertiary" function – the product's perceived status and pride of possession value' (1994: 131). It is this shift in function from primary (its capacity to

squeeze lemons in relation to a competitive price – its proper function) to tertiary function (what it means to people – its system function) that constitutes the main argument around the symbolic value of this lemon squeezer.

## Symbolic value

The second debate surrounding *Juicy Salif* concerns its symbolic value, which assesses its worth in relation to notions of culture and kinship. In contrast to its functional value, symbolic characteristics are not obviously translatable into exchange mechanisms and money, although this is not to say they fall outside the market or contemporary capitalist processes.

*Juicy Salif*'s symbolic value is directed by Alessi's approach to design. As Lees-Maffei (2002: 44) and Julier (2000: 77) point out, the company carefully crafts ready-made meanings and cultural associations to enhance the symbolic value of its products. Through its self-published literature (Alessi 1994, 1998; Scarcella 1987), marketing strategies and the Museo Alessi (Alessi 2004), it controls a dominant part of the public perception of its output, giving to its objects what Lees-Maffei calls *italianità*: a particular design heritage based on craft (Lees-Maffei 2002: 38–43), and a highly persuasive concept of family (Lees-Maffei 2002: 52–5). A photograph used in most Alessi publicity, publications and on the website, shows male members of the family from different generations – who, of course, control the company – holding *Juicy Salif* in various positions, some very creative, brandishing it as a trophy and prudently avoiding holding its main body, a pose that would convert it into a menacing weapon. The playfulness of this portrait, together with the relaxed attire and attitude of the younger Alessi family members, counteracts the traditional image of corporate business. The control of the family, however, is intense, centralized and goes to the extent that it is usual for Alessi's name to appear in the products, instead of the designer's, with Michael Graves being the only exception (Lees-Maffei 2002: 54).

Another family – fictional, this time – brandishing this lemon squeezer can be found in the card game *Unhappy Families* (2005). The Concretes represent a particular stereotype: they are culturally knowing, as exemplified by the visual and textual references in the cards and the booklet of character profiles: architecture, stainless



steel, black, retro classics, Mercedes, cashmere, Mies van der Rohe, minimalist spaces and Barcelona are mentioned as the family's predominant identity conferrers and are used as a means of distinction (Bourdieu 1986) from other social groups, showing the family's knowledge of what constitutes a design icon. In the four cards that make the Concrete family, three Alessi objects appear: Michael Graves' kitchen timer, Alessandro Mendini's Anna G corkscrew and *Juicy Salif*.

The roles of producer and consumer are blurred, as the production of the object is only completed when meaning and value are attributed, through 'identification and decoding' (Lloyd and Snelders 2003: 244). At the time *Juicy Salif* was made, Alessi's products were typically gifts: the object bestows the owner (and the buyer of the gift) with specific 'cultural capital' (Bourdieu 1986: 12, 39, 53–4), a symbolic characteristic that can be used as currency, as in the Gómez Pereira film referred to above. The maid, by stealing *Juicy Salif*, aimed to take more than a lemon squeezer. As Julier (2000: 70) mentions, Philippe Starck's lemon squeezer is a 'token good', an affordable intimation (or imitation) of high life that evidences the discerning capabilities and connoisseurship of the consumer. Contemporary culture has numerous examples of these types of objects on the streets – think of Jonathan Ive's ubiquitous iPod – and in the media – for example Carrie Bradshaw's weakness for Manolo Blahnik's shoes in HBO's *Sex and the City* (2005). The concept of 'token good' has a debt to Thorstein Veblen's 'conspicuous consumption' – the demonstration of leisure time, cultural understanding and economic status through goods – a concept he contextualized within the leisure class (Veblen 2004). Annechen Bahr Bugge (2003) looks at cooking as a manifestation of identity with reference to Norwegian society. She identifies three main discourses: the health discourse, the national discourse and the gourmet discourse, framing the latter within a conspicuous cooking practice and the need for 'expensive design equipment and technological aids in brushed steel' (Bugge 2003: 7). She cites Alessi as the best-established company for kitchenware in Norway (2003: 7); Scandinavia is, indeed, the third-largest market for Alessi, after Italy and Germany (Lees-Maffei 2002: 51).

Veblen's 'conspicuous consumption' and Julier's 'token goods' ultimately relate to Marx's 'commodity fetishism', arguably his major contribution to the field of political economy. This concept signals the complicated relationship between objects and people. He defines

commodity as: 'in the first place, an object outside us, a thing that by its properties satisfies human wants of some sort or another' (Marx 1995: 13). However, he also warns us that: 'A commodity appears, at first sight, a very trivial thing, and easily understood. Its analysis shows that it is, in reality, a very queer thing, abounding in metaphysical subtleties and theological niceties' (1995: 42). Commodities have two types of value associated with them: use-value – what satisfies the human need – and exchange-value – a quantitative measure that converts a product into a commodity by relating it to other commodities (Osborne 2005: 12–14). It is this latter value, an *ideal* and *social* one, that appears to be natural to the object; it contains the *metaphysical subtleties and theological niceties* and makes commodities contradictory, riddle-like, obscure to interpretation. To relate it back to the two debates around *Juicy Salif* that occupy us, use-value would normally be associated with issues around its function (to squeeze lemons), whereas the symbolic debate would turn around the exchange-value of the product. Moreover, according to Marx, objects, being distanced from their productive base, adopt special faculties or powers beyond their exchange-value, namely the powers that enable human relations (Marx 1995: 42–50): this is 'commodity fetishism'. Marx's use of the term fetishism in his coining of 'commodity fetishism', is radically different to Sigmund Freud's conception, who understood it as a psychological condition of a subject, whose desire transforms the significance of particular objects (Osborne 2005: 11). To understand Marx, we must return to the definition of fetish pre-Freud and pre-Enlightenment, and to the understanding of commodity as value rather than a physical object. For Marx, the fetish character of commodities is inherent to them insofar as they are commodities. In that sense, commodities are not fetishized by individual consumers – that may be consumer fetishism (Osborne 2005: 11). 'Commodity fetishism' is a product of the social relations of production characteristic of capitalism.

Marx's conception of value can be put in relation to the functional distinctions made by Whitely (1994) and Preston (2000) as outlined above. The primary or proper function of design objects is related to its use-value, whereas the meaning of objects for people or tertiary function would normally be part of its exchange-value. This type of value could also be linked to Preston's system function in the case of *Juicy Salif*, if we take the viewpoint that the object is a lemon

squeezer, rather than a conversation starter. My own experience of buying *Juicy Salif*, though, is a testimony of how use/exchange-value and proper/system functions can switch places and provoke misunderstandings. When I worked in Central London, I could imagine no better pleasure than visiting Selfridges department store during my lunch hour. As at the time I was researching Starck's approach to kitchenware design, this was a perfect excuse for me to spend time at the Alessi counter, mainly handling *Juicy Salif*. One day, I was ready to buy it and I asked a shop assistant for a boxed product. To my surprise, I had to endure a long and hard conversation as she tried to save me money and sense, by convincing me to buy a more affordable and more efficient lemon squeezer, a glass one, which she claimed was also good looking. Only my assertion that I did not want it to squeeze lemons brought her silence. At the time, Alessi's item retailed at around £40, because it offered something more than a squeezer. Its potential to start conversations and become the centre of attention (which is what I was purchasing), is what differentiated *Juicy Salif* from all the other similar products in the shop, what made it desirable. The shop assistant and I had different use-values in mind.

Mariëlle Creusen and Jan Schoormans (2005) taxonomize what they see as the six different roles that product appearance may have in consumer choice: functional – exhibition of functional features; ergonomic – display of consequences of use; categorization – a product's differentiation from its category; attention drawing – capture of consumer attention in store; aesthetic – possibility of aesthetic appreciation; and symbolic – enablement of associations (2005: 75). Although the last four are the most evidently represented, Starck's lemon squeezer embodies all of them, even if tangentially, as, for example, one can easily imagine what would happen if it was put to use. Donald Norman (2004) studies designs that provoke emotions and distinguishes three levels of processing in the affective system: visceral or pre-conscious level; behavioural or use level, and reflective or cognitive level. *Juicy Salif*, he explains, scores 'zero for behavioural design' (Norman 2004: 115) as the pleasure and effectiveness of use are likely to provoke negative emotions. Starck's design, however, scores highly on the reflective and visceral levels because it provokes the generation of memories, giving the owner a degree of personal satisfaction and stimulating the creation of self-image. Its

appearance is enticing (Norman 2004: 114–15). Norman owns an anniversary edition of the lemon squeezer, which, as he confessed, is proudly displayed in his entrance hall (2004: 115). To their owners – such as myself and Norman – *Juicy Salif* expresses specific characteristics related to their personal goals (Khaslavsky and Shedroff 1999: 47). As Starck himself puts it: ‘The *Juicy Salif* – a byword for over-design, the parvenu’s gewgaw – is more cultish totem than juicer’ (McGuirk: 2006).

After reviewing all the taxonomies around this object – my own, related to different kinds of squeezers, Preston (2000) and Whitely’s (1994) around function, Marx’s value (1995), Creusen and Schoorman’s on product appearance (2005) and Norman’s study of levels of processing (2004) – we can now turn to explore directly why *Juicy Salif* has become a design icon. One possible reason why it is successful in embodying diverse symbolic characteristics is located in its polysemic nature, the possibility of containing different and often contradictory meanings within its manifestation. Julier alludes to its in-between characteristics: its ‘neither male nor female’ attributes (2000: 68), its ‘strangely transsexual aspect’ (2000: 67), the fact that it only half-works, its cultured but low-brow characteristics, its display function competing with its singularity and its commodified yet unmarketable quality (2000: 67–85). Lloyd and Snelders (2003: 250) mention its possible metaphorical associations: ‘We have the idea of permanence, the idea of “a past future”, the possibility of irony, the idea of instability, and of sex. A sexy, Soviet statue; a morality tale for the overspending consumer: beware of fixed, top-heavy systems, for they may be toppled.’ These interpretations are all plausible, as Lloyd and Snelders (2003: 238–40) explain, because they are narratives that are personal and/or embedded into public consciousness and this is precisely what *Juicy Salif* taps into: ‘The mere fact that the product exists says more about the people that buy and use the product than the original intentions of the designer’ (Lloyd and Snelders 2003: 244). For them, the product ‘offers up its secrets’ (Lloyd and Snelders 2003: 245), and its malfunctioning adds to this process of forming a relationship. This, they argue, opens up the personal creativity of the consumer (Lloyd and Snelders 2003: 252), as can be seen in the playful meaning-making narrative they construct around *Juicy Salif*.



This polysemy both in its metaphorical qualities and its in-between characteristics is directly related to the object's appearance, or the way it manifests itself through form and material. A key consequence of the characteristic way *Juicy Salif* looks – the possibility of making associations with rocket ships, squids (Lloyd and Snelders 2003: 241–43) and arachnids – has been its cultural significance, cult following and creative impact evidenced through its inspiration of objects, publicity campaigns, film plots and props and, of course, other kitchen utensil designs.<sup>2</sup> The link between the two, however, is not clear.

How is it that this polysemy, this multiplicity of symbolic frameworks makes us, as individuals and groups, ascribe meaning and give value to this object, which, arguably, is simply a lemon squeezer? A psychoanalytic viewpoint, with a Lacanian slant, may help us shed some light onto the matter. Its focus on the psychodynamics of desire and the relation between subject and object, its ontology as a clinical practice – which can be put in relation to a design practice – and the importance of the gaze within it make it a suitable intellectual territory in which to situate an analysis of Starck's design icon.

### *Juicy Salif* as seductive object

Psychoanalysis is a body of knowledge within the field of psychology that focuses on the functioning and behaviour of the mind and its treatment. It was first theorized and practised by Sigmund Freud at the turn of the twentieth century. After Freud's death, psychoanalysis split into many schools, the more relevant being Ego psychology, object relations and Lacanian analysis. In the seminar teachings that constitute the core of his writings, French psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan promoted a 'return to Freud' (Lacan 1975), to reading his texts and following him *à la lettre*, something, he claimed, other schools of thought within psychoanalysis had not done. Lacan's ideas, however, were also influenced by phenomenologists such as Maurice Merleau-Ponty, structuralists – in particular Claude Lévi-Strauss – and Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure. These influences account for his search for structure within topology (see for example, his conceptualization of the three orders as a Borromean knot, Lacan: 1974–5), and for the importance he attributes to language within human experience – best exemplified by his famous statement: 'the unconscious is structured like a language' (Lacan 1998: 48).

Lacan's major contribution to the field of psychoanalytic practice and theory is, arguably, his conceptualization of Object (a). Object (a) is a complex concept, in flux throughout Lacan's work and linked to many aspects of his theory. This algebraic formula, normally left untranslated, refers to the little other (*autre*, in French), which in Lacanian theory relates to reflexivity, identification and the Ego, as opposed to the big Other, the radical alterity of language and the law. Object (a) is the cause of desire: not the object to which desire is directed, but that which provokes desire. Object (a) is *unspecularizable*, it resists symbolization and has no representation or alterity. Object (a) evolves from earlier formations such as Freud's *das Ding* (Lacan 1992) and Plato's *Agalma*, a precious object Alcibiades believed to be hidden in Socrates' body. Desire is paramount to Lacan's thought: in its unconscious form, it is 'at the heart of human existence and [is] the central concern of psychoanalysis' (Evans 1996: 36); Object (a) mobilizes this force. Paradoxically, Object (a) is also the object of anxiety. It is a lack, a void, around which the drives, partial aspects through which desire is realised, circle. As such, obtaining it and satisfying desire is impossible. Attempts, however, are made through partial objects, which stand in for Object (a). Object (a) is at the centre of clinical psychoanalytic practice and is also key to what can be termed the *Discourse of the Artefact*,<sup>3</sup> as will be seen below. Object (a) it will be claimed, is an object of seduction.

This last term, however, is a slightly contentious one. If I asked my readers if they had ever been seduced, I suspect I would get an almost unanimous positive answer. However, if I asked them to give me a definition of seduction, chances are it would take some time to find an agreement. Indeed, it is quite common to find divergent positions and inconsistencies in its conceptualization. Its complexity, contradictions, devious uses of the word, confusing definition and imprecision seem to be the only points of agreement between the different approaches taken by, amongst others, cultural commentators, film theorists, consumption theorists, captologists (those who study computers as persuasive technology) and psychoanalysts.

Etymologically, the term seduction comes from the Latin *se* (apart) and *ducere* (to lead). Its verb form is defined as 'to lead astray from right behaviour' by the Concise Oxford English Dictionary (1964). It is also 'to err in conduct or belief'. Seductive behaviour is often considered 'in contradiction with moral law' and tends to be related

to sexual matters. Rex Butler defines it as 'the getting of another to do what we want, not by force or coercion, but by an exercise of their own, though often mistaken or misguided, free will' (Butler 1999: 71). Jean Baudrillard understood seduction as a reigning principle: 'everything is seduction and nothing but seduction', he said (Baudrillard 1991: 83). He sees seduction as opposed to production and belonging to the realm of appearances: 'To seduce is to die as reality and reconstitute oneself as illusion' (1991: 69). For him, seduction is dual, a matter of two; and it involves a duel, a challenging play or game. Seduction is relational, reversible, ambiguous. One can never be sure it really happens. Seduction and desire are not discrete terms, but continuous with each other (Tortajada 2004: 230). To follow a Lacanian structure, they seem to relate to each other as if part of a Möbius strip, a topological surface with one single side and only one boundary component. As the two sides are continuous, a crossover from inside to outside and back is possible. However, when one passes a finger round the surface of the Möbius strip, it is impossible to say at which precise point the crossing has taken place. To paraphrase Slavoj Žižek, seduction is not a simple reverse of content, 'we encounter it when we progress far enough on the side' of desire itself (Žižek 1991: 230). Baudrillard (1999: 111) further links seduction and desire: 'only the subject desires; only the object seduces'. Seduction, in and through Object (a), seduces desire and then moves on.

What makes our object of study culturally valuable is its ability to seduce, to lead consumers and viewers astray from what may be considered right behaviour (buying a cheaper, more efficient lemon squeezer, for example). Thus, *Juicy Salif* stands for Object (a) and actualizes it; it is its manifestation – although not its representation – and as such it incites desire in the viewer, user or owner. This is due to its appearance, and the playfulness of its function, a 'leading astray' characteristic as we saw above. *Juicy Salif* is seductive because of its ambiguous functional and symbolic value. In this case, function and form, however twisted and strange looking, follow seduction.

The idea of characterizing this lemon squeezer as a seductive object is not new, however. In their paper *Understanding the seductive experience* (1999), Julie Khaslavsky and Nathan Shedroff, exponents of captology, look at *Juicy Salif* and extract eight characteristics which, they argue, make this object seductive. These crystallize many of the qualities we have been discussing:

- (1) They say that it entices by diverting attention. This is mainly due to the object's appearance.
- (2) It delivers a surprising novelty. Its function, its purpose is ambiguous.
- (3) It goes beyond the obvious needs and expectations of a usual lemon juicer. Offered as a kitchen utensil, it is also an object of contemplation.
- (4) It creates an instinctive response, for example curiosity, interest, aversion, confusion, distress or fear. It squeezes lemons but can be brandished as a menacing-looking weapon.
- (5) It espouses values or connections to personal goals.
- (6) It also promises to fulfil these goals. According to Khaslavsky and Shedroff (1999), the subversive approach, the elegance and simplicity of this lemon squeezer's conception incites in the consumer a desire not only to possess the object, but also the values that helped create it, including innovation, sophistication, elegance and originality. To users, it speaks as much about the designer as about themselves.
- (7) It leads the user to discover something deeper about the experience of juicing lemons. Through the obliteration of its function and the elevation of its status and that of its owner, as argued earlier, it makes an ordinary object extraordinary. Through transforming the experience (its peculiar shape makes the user adopt a specific body posture), it makes a common process different.
- (8) *Juicy Salif* constantly renovates these promises and validates the original emotions and values every time the object is utilized, shown or talked about.

Baudrillard (1991), I suspect, would challenge Khaslavsky and Shedroff's (1999) attempt at systematizing seduction. These eight seductive characteristics mainly describe the reception of seduction from the point of view of the seducee. The seductive experience they refer to is that of the desiring subject, whose attention is diverted, has emotions, values, goals and squeezes lemons. The seducer object and 'its destiny' – to quote Baudrillard (1999: 111) – together with the relational aspects between object and subject, have not been addressed by this model.

Baudrillard (1991: 83) warns us that seduction will seduce everything, including attempts to study it. It will resist efforts at systematization whatever the approach. In his words, 'seduction is eternal



and its mastery, impossible' (Baudrillard 1988: 74). His answer to seduction's power is reflected in the peculiar writing style used in his study, which embodies seduction, rather than comments on it (Butler 1999: 101). Another answer to seduction's pervasiveness is to focus on the study of its practices rather than on the phenomenon itself, or its processes. Seductive practices call seduction into play instead of just identifying and naming it. Even though studying seduction itself may be problematic, if not impossible, we can recognize and study seductive objects. Moreover, Rex Butler (1999: 107) argues that, from an analysis of the examples used by Baudrillard in *Seduction*, it can be concluded that music and literature are 'themselves seductive'. If we also consider Baudrillard's later interest in objecthood, and his attempts to relate this, and his theories around gaze, to the themes he developed in *Seduction* (1991), one may argue that objects of contemplation can be added to the category of things seductive *in themselves*.

Psychoanalysis is also a seductive practice, as explored, for example, by Baudrillard (1991: 53–9) in his discussion on seduction as psychoanalysis's lost object; by Danuza Machado in her interview with Alex Ports (Kivland and Du Ry 2000: 3–8) and in the clinical discussions of Clapham (1997) and Weatherill (2000). To evidence this assertion within the theoretical framework of Object (a) and desire, we must now turn to explore Lacan's *Discourse of the Analyst* (Figure 14.2). This discourse traditionally complements three others: those of the Master, the University and the Hysteric (Lacan 1991), even though, in Seminar XVII, Lacan suggested a fifth, the Capitalist Discourse, left largely unexplored (see, for example, Declercq 2006). The theory of the Four Discourses examines different relationships within structures of various social bonds, or situations of power. All four discourses contain the same elements:

- Object (a), the object at the heart of clinical practice
- A Master Signifier, or a signifier outside the chain of signification ( $S_1$ ), something that may not make sense
- The barred subject or subject of speech ( $S$ )
- The signifying other, or the place from which one speaks, knowledge ( $S_2$ )

These four elements are then placed in relation to each other (Figure 14.1). Each discourse is created from clockwise or anti-clockwise rotation of the core elements, starting from the Master's

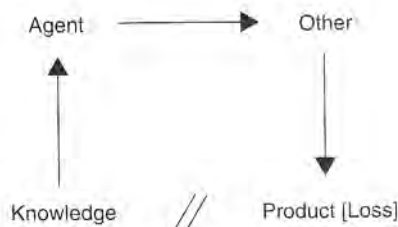


Figure 14.1 Structure of the Four Discourses

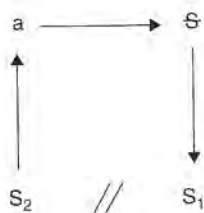


Figure 14.2 The *Discourse of the Analyst*

discourse. The four elements can take four different positions, each with a specific role: knowledge, the agent, the other and product or loss. So how does the *Discourse of the Analyst* work?

In the *Discourse of the Analyst*, the discourse ‘that structures the conditions under which questions and answers circulate’ (Adams 1991: 83), Lacan places Object (*a*) as representing the analyst in the commanding position. The analyst is the patient’s object of desire. Thus, this is how the analysis relationship takes place: the analyst interrogates the divided subject (*S*), the patient or analysand, from a position of (assumed) knowledge (*S*<sub>2</sub>). Her division shows through ‘slips of the tongue, bungled and unintended acts, slurred speech, dreams’ (Fink 1995: 135). These constitute the symptom, the master signifier (*S*<sub>1</sub>), which also represents the end of an association, something that stops the analysand’s speech, a signifier that is lost and does not make sense. This is what is produced in analysis, but also what is lost in the process: through analysis, this signifier is first, isolated; second, questioned and connected to other signifiers in a dialectic relationship (that is, made sense of in relation to knowledge or *S*<sub>2</sub>); and third, got rid of (Žižek 2006).

Seduction and desire are essential to the practice of analysis, as Lacan demonstrates. But a seductive element is also present in our

relation to certain objects, notably those found within the gallery space. The argument I would like to put forward is: if certain artefacts – such as *Juicy Salif* – can bring Object (a) into being and are its manifestation (as argued above) they therefore occupy, in the gallery space, shop display or any other privileged enclosure, the position the analyst occupies in the consulting room. Although Lacan did not explicitly form a *Discourse of the Artefact*, he thought about the object and suggested a possible relationship to the subject similar to that facilitated by analytic practice, as shown in his Seminars, especially VI (Lacan 1958–9), XI (Lacan 1986), XVII (Lacan 1991) and XXI (Lacan 1973–4). The artefact takes the position of the analyst, something not thought about in many psychoanalytic studies of cultural objects, since the common position is to ‘analyse’ the work. This means that we, viewers, in the right conditions and context, adopt the position of the analysand, with the object revealing our symptom, something of ourselves we might not have known about. Since Lacan, the mechanics of ‘artefact as analyst’ have been worked through by a number of theorists and practitioners: for example, by Parveen Adams, in her contextualization of Mary Kelly’s *Interim* show (1991), and Robert Samuels, in his examination of Lacan’s interest in art, especially Aragon’s poetry and Holbein’s *Ambassadors* (Samuels 1995). More recently, displays confronting viewers in this particular social bond have been held at the Centre for Freudian Analysis and Research in London, and have been discussed in the talks accompanying the exhibitions and the subsequent journal publication (Kivland and Du Ry 2000). However, the proposition that the place the analyst and the artefact occupy, that of Object (a), is the place of the seducer changes the framework and understanding of the social bond between subjects and objects, making it active. Seduction unfolds from the artefact, whether in the form of an analyst (for the analysand) or *Juicy Salif* (for the viewer/user/owner). As a result, a turning point for the subject can take place, similar to that represented by the psychoanalytic act – its practice, rather than the psychoanalysing of objects, authors or intentions. And I concur with Danuza Machado: that is a moment to celebrate (Kivland and Du Ry 2000: 7).

## Conclusion

*Juicy Salif* has originated innovation in the relationship between its form and its function. Its ‘household icon’ status (Heskett 2003: 58)

is affirmed by Alessi's careful product marketing strategies and the debates around its functional qualities and symbolic value. However, both debates cannot be separated; part of this lemon squeezer's symbolic qualities derive from the fact that its 'good looks' come at a performative cost: 'high ratio of price to functionality' (Julier 2000: 69), loss of material (gold or aluminium plating), high effort in squeezing lemons and cleaning the juicer (Russo and de Moraes 2003: 147) and spilt liquid.

As a best-selling design icon, *Juicy Salif* cannot be evaluated by its effectiveness in squeezing lemons. That, as we have seen, may not be its real function after all. Starck wanted to create something more, something that would make users, viewers and owners experience the object in a different way, both from the point of view of its performance (squeezing lemons with *Juicy Salif* is different than with any other juicer) and its aesthetic. With *Juicy Salif*, Starck used three distinct strategies to get to his client group: polysemy – users, viewers and owners are given the opportunity to attach meaning to an object that can hold many; extension of creativity into its consumption – demonstrated in the misuse of the product (Lloyd and Snelders 2003: 251–2); and, crucially, seduction – a relational situation in which the object leads astray and reveals something about themselves that users, viewers and owners might not have known about. Innovating a household product in this way, by altering both its functional and symbolic aspects, is not easy to accomplish and requires a high level of skill. *Juicy Salif* manages to fulfil this and, with a relatively affordable price and strong manufacturing, marketing and distribution framework provided by Alessi, it reaches a wide audience. Starck's creativity has been recognized and rewarded by his peers, his client group and the market. But, even though Alessi commissioned a star designer, the success of this object could not have been accurately predicted. While this chapter has given some thought to how it connects with people, why *Juicy Salif* works is partly a mystery. There's always something that escapes.

Seductive characteristics are crucial for the creation of design icons. *Juicy Salif* provides a challenging but pertinent case study for research into these, the interaction with seduced viewers, users and owners, the value(s) – in the broader sense of the term – in both sides of the relationship, and how these relate to the contemporary late capitalist context. Although Khaslavsky and Shedroff's (1999) study on seduction begins to pinpoint some of the factors that may have



led consumers astray from buying a more economic, manageable and effective product, a study of its characteristics in a relational context, through the psychoanalytic Object (a) and an emerging *Discourse of the Artefact*, may help to better understand why this disproportioned, menacing-looking, inefficient lemon squeezer is one of Alessi's best selling products, a design icon, a cultish totem.

### Notes

- 1 For an image of *Juicy Salif* and a summary account of the commission and conceptualization in the words of its manufacturer (Alessi), as well as for other products by this designer, the reader could, in the first instance, refer to Starck (2000).
- 2 Starck sketched ideas for *Juicy Salif* on a tablemat of the restaurant Capraia Isola. The drawings, reproduced in Lloyd and Snelders (2003), clearly show the connection with rockets, arachnids and spaceships. Apart from the Manuel Gómez Pereira film mentioned above, *Juicy Salif* appeared in the 2004 film *Team America: World Police*, amongst others.
- 3 Here, the term *artefact* has been used with the same meaning as that of *object* in the earlier part of the text. The change in noun is propitiated by a wish to avoid confusion between *object* and the psychoanalytic Object (a), which, as seen, has a very particular meaning. I did not want to use *artefact* from the beginning because of its connotations of estrangement and the dialectic issues discussed in relation to the subject, for which the term *object* is far more suitable.

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# Managing Creativity

What are the challenges and opportunities of managing people in creative industries? How are the tensions between creative and commercial pressures mediated?

The creative industries are an area of increasing economic importance. Yet creative industries and creative-based organizations are rife with problems such as whether and how control of the creative process should be exercised; the extent to which knowledge of creative production may be made explicit; and how the 'connection' between producer and consumer should be mediated. In *Managing Creativity*, a team of experts from a diverse range of fields – including management, fine art, music, the internet, design, theatre and publishing – discuss these and other problems concerning the relationship between management and creativity. Developing an appreciation of these problems is theoretically productive, not only because it throws new light onto our understanding of creative-based organizations, but also because it can be revelatory about organizations more generally.

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